

WNBA: A League Where the Players Always Lose

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

Sports have always been an integral part of culture since their development. Particularly, the game of basketball, developed in 1891, has been a popular sport in the United States and in Indiana. At its origin, women were excluded from this game because it “wasn’t meant for them”. Today, in part due to Title IX, a women’s league, the Women’s National Basketball Association, exists in the United States. A variety of issues impact this league, however, including player treatment, salary, and media coverage. These issues and how they currently impact today’s league are analyzed and compared to the international women’s basketball leagues and the men’s National Basketball Association.

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Process Analysis Statement

As I began to brainstorm ideas for my Honors thesis, I struggled to come up with a topic that would both interesting and meaningful to myself and others. That's when I started doing research about the WNBA, a league that I had followed for years, yet not learned much about. As I read about the issues facing this league, I became passionate about this topic and decided it would be a great idea for my Honors thesis.

My preliminary research on the history of basketball, especially women's basketball, enlightened and intrigued me. Although I knew that women had had a difficult time being integrated into the sport, but basketball, but not to the extent that I discovered. It was an eye-opening experience, and one that I enjoyed.

With the guidance of Dr. Lang, I began researching various issues that caused problems for female basketball athletes. I found salary, sexism, and biased treatment as the biggest three factors. I began reading news articles and journal articles about the WNBA and its parent league, the NBA, to draw comparisons to understand these discrepancies. I examined contracts, player agreements, and league policies. At one point I read the entire rule book for the WNBA. Through my research and analysis, I felt that I learned a lot regarding the process of research and writing. I appreciated this experience and I hope you enjoy my thesis!

Introduction

Basketball has been a man's game since its development in 1891. Since that time, women have always been trying to get involved in basketball, but doors were constantly being slammed in their face. After over 100 years, women have finally organized a professional league in the United States called the Women's National Basketball Association. However, a variety of issues have plagued it since its birth in 1996. This paper will discuss the history of women's basketball, will compare the WNBA to the NBA, and discuss the issues that continue to plague the WNBA.

History of Women's Basketball

Since its creation, basketball has always been a popular game, though that was not the intention. In 1891, Dr. James Naismith invented the game of basketball in Springfield, Massachusetts. (Grundy, 2007) As an educator at a local YMCA, he was tasked with developing a game that would "tame" the rowdy young men in his physical education class. News of this incredible new game spread quickly, and people began playing it all over the country. The information of this game reached 24-year-old Senda Berenson, a physical educator at Smith College in Northhampton, Massachusetts (Grundy, 2007). She adapted Dr. Naismith's game for women even though Dr. Naismith did not believe the game would be a good activity for women as it did not "promote womanhood". Berenson's adapted version prevented stealing, dribbling more than three times, and holding the ball for more than three seconds. This adaptation was meant to prevent developing "dangerous nervous tendencies and losing the grace and dignity and self-respect that we would all have women foster" (Jenkins, 1997).

Though Berenson adapted the game for her physical culture class, most women still did not have the opportunity to play the sport. Clara Baer, a physical education at Sophie Newcomb College, decided the physical education system for women needed a change. There needed to be

more competition. It was not enough to play against other women in a physical education class, there should be competition available between other classes or even other schools. By 1893, Baer had freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors playing against each other at Sophie Newcomb College. Teams were forming at schools all over the nation. Programs were also found at Iowa State College, Carleton College, and Mount Holyoke College in 1893. (Lewis, 2018) The growth and increase in programs eventually led to the first women's intercollegiate game on April 4, 1896. This game took place between the University of Stanford and University of California Berkley. Stanford emerged victorious by a score of 2-1 and all women that participated were given varsity letters for their efforts (Grundy, 2007). Athletic competition was beginning to be considered an integral part of American womanhood, though that revolution fell short. In 1899, Stanford University abolished women's intercollegiate competition (Grundy, 2007). Faculty at Stanford stated that the women's intercollegiate team sports were abolished "for the good of the students' health and the unpleasant publicity accompanying the contests". (Stanford, 2018). As for the unpleasant publicity, men were not even allowed to be at the games until 1907. In fact, men were commonly found and arrested on nearby roofs for trying to get a glimpse at the women's games (Grundy, 2007). As for actual progress on the women's competition front, everything seemed to stall until the 1960s.

The Push for Growth

The stalling was not due to a lack of women's competition but due to the presence of conflicting principles around it. (Grundy, 2007) Most amateur sports in the United States went through the Amateur Athletic Union, or AAU. The goal of their organization was to create common standards of sports across the United States. It is one of the nation's leading and most influential sport association. (AAU) In 1908, the Amateur Athletic Union took the stance that

women should not be allowed to publicly play basketball. Additionally, the American Olympic Committee opposed women participating in any Olympic sport in 1914. The American public grew weary and unhappy with this decision, and companies started creating industry-sponsored teams. In these industry leagues, female factory workers would form teams at their respective factory and would compete against other factories. (Grundy, 2007) Eventually, this became a worldwide issue and an all-women's international sports competition called Jeux Olympiques Feminines was created in 1921. This competition was created to give women an opportunity to compete on a worldwide scale because they barely had any competition in their home countries. (Lewis, 2018) The Jeux Olympiques Feminines existed until 1924 when the Olympics started including women's sports. However, all women's sports were only included as an exhibition event and did not count in the medal competition. These sports included volleyball, basketball, and tennis. (Olympics) With the Olympics including women's basketball, the American Athletic Union retracted their original statement and actually held a national tournament for women that contained six teams in 1926. These AAU national tournaments continued but in 1929, a beauty contest was required as part of the tournament. This sparked a lot of controversy and resulted in the formation of the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation in 1930. This organization was against women's basketball competition and pressured state women's basketball organizations to ban these tournaments. This was successful in few states like Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, and New York (Wheelock, 2012), but the ban was not nationally successful, so most states still continued with their statewide and AAU tournaments. (Lewis, 2018) This pressure continued throughout the 1940s and 1950s with neither side gaining any ground. The growth in women's basketball had officially stalled.

Influence of Title IX

The 1960s was the start of the women's liberation era. The United States government was considerably behind equal rights for women as compared to the Soviet Union. (Union Information Bureau, n.d.) As of 1927, women had the same rights and privileges as men in respect to property right and equal pay for equal work. In order to assess this inequality in women's sports, the Division for Girls and Women in Sport, a part of the American Association for Health, created the Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women in 1966. This commission not only promoted women's collegiate athletics, but also worked with the American Medical Association to promote exercise among women of all ages (Grundy, 2007). However, this commission did not fix everything. Women had some amateur sports teams through the AAU but still lacked the funding and facilities to properly run a professional team. On June 23, 1972, Richard Nixon signed into law "The Education Amendments of 1972," which included the most important piece of legislation for women's athletics, Title IX (Grundy, 2007).

Title IX Advocates

This legislation was the product of many politicians that included Bernice Sandler. An advocate for women's rights from New York City, NY, Bernice had a PhD in counseling and was not hired as a professional counselor because she was a female. This rejection led her to begin collecting stories of other women's experiences of discrimination in higher education in the US. She ended up working with the Women's Equity Action League and filed a claim against the United States Department of Labor. (Grundy, 2007)

There were many legislators that were involved in the development of Title IX. Martha Griffiths, a Congresswoman from Michigan, gave the first speech on sex discrimination in education. (Grundy, 2007) Edith Green, a Congresswoman from Oregon, introduced the first bill

on gender equity that applied to higher education. (Grundy, 2007) That gender equity bill was co-authored by Patsy Mink, another advocate for Title IX. A Congresswoman from Hawaii, she didn't intend to be involved in politics but instead, she wanted to be a doctor. After being denied entrance into medical school because she was a female, Mink became a lawyer, and no one would hire her. The main advocate for Title IX was Birch Bayh, a Senator from Indiana. He was the chief Senate sponsor for the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. He felt that the Equal Rights Amendment "gave the women of America something that is rightfully theirs-an equal chance to attend the schools of their choice, to develop the skills they want." (Grundy, 2007)

Title IX states that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." Though this law was not necessarily geared towards athletics, it still managed to open many doors for female athletes. It required any institution, both high schools and public colleges, to legally have to offer males and females equitable opportunities. What was meant by "equitable" was debated for many years, and still is a matter of discussion. For example, in 1974, Senator Tower proposed the "Tower Amendment" that would have exempted profitable sports from Title IX compliance. This amendment was rejected because it essentially exempted most men's sports from having to comply.

In 1975, President Ford signed a piece of legislature that contained Title IX regulations for sports. (Women's Sports Foundation, n.d.) This legislation contained the three-pronged test. The three aspects to the compliance test are participation, athletic financial assistance, and treatment. For participation compliance, schools have to compare the female-to-male athlete

ratio to the female-to-male full-time undergraduate student ratio. If the ratios are equal, the school is in compliance. For athletic financial assistance compliance, scholarships have to be distributed based on the proportion of male-to-female athletes. For treatment compliance, eleven different criteria must be shown to be comparable between men and women sports, including facilities, recruiting, medical trainers, coaching, equipment, publicity, travel, academic help, housing and dining services, scheduling, and administrative support. (Women's Sports Foundation, n.d.)

Title IX helped promote women's sports. It required schools to create women's teams in order to comply with Title IX. In many cases, basketball was one of the sports programs created for women due to it being more popular in comparison to other sports. This "forced" growth has resulted in a 545% increase in female college athletes since 1972. (Olmstead, 2016) This drastic growth in female athletes has contributed to the increase in overall talent level in each sport. Specifically, for basketball, the increase in talent demands an outlet for these talented players to showcase their skills following college. Until 1996, that outlet didn't exist in the United States.

Development of Women's National Basketball Association

On April 26, 1996, the National Basketball Association announced the Women's National Basketball Association with the slogan "We got next.". This was a huge announcement at the time., as most talented American female players normally had to travel overseas to make a living playing basketball. The league was seen as a counterpart to the NBA. The games would take place during the NBA offseason and all 8 inaugural teams shared an arena with an NBA team. The first 8 teams were the Charlotte Sting, Cleveland Rockers, Houston Comets, New York Liberty, Los Angeles Sparks, Phoenix Mercury, Sacramento Monarchs, and Utah Starzz. All 8 of these teams were owned and operated by their NBA counterparts. These teams began

play on June 21, 1997. This league was so highly anticipated that 50+ million viewers watched during the first season. (WNBA)

Since the first season the game has changed a lot. Team movement has occurred frequently within the WNBA. This movement is indicated in the chart below:

Original Franchise name	Current Name, if different	Current City	Year Formed	Year Disbanded
Charlotte Sting		Charlotte, NC	1996	2006
Cleveland Rockers		Cleveland, OH	1996	2004
Houston Comets		Houston, TX	1996	2008
New York Liberty		White Plains, NY	1996	
Los Angeles Sparks		Los Angeles, CA	1996	
Phoenix Mercury		Phoenix, AZ	1996	
Sacramento Monarchs		Sacramento, CA	1996	2008
Utah Starzz	San Antonio Silver Stars, Las Vegas Aces	Las Vegas, NV	1996	
Detroit Shock	Tulsa Shock, Dallas Wings	Dallas, TX	1997	
Washington Mystics		Washington, D.C.	1997	
Orlando Miracle	Connecticut Sun	Uncasville, CT	1998	

Minnesota Lynx		Minneapolis, MN	1998	
Indiana Fever		Indianapolis, IN	1999	
Miami Sol		Miami, FL	1999	2002
Portland Fire		Portland, OR	1999	2002
Seattle Storm		Seattle, WA	1999	
Chicago Sky		Chicago, IL	2005	
Atlanta Dream		Atlanta, GA	2008	

WNBA Structure

Each team plays 34 games in a season which starts in May, in which the top 8 teams with the best record advance to the playoffs. There are 4 rounds, each with a differing structure recorded in the chart below. With reseeding, the highest seeded team will always play the lowest seeded team present. (WNBA)

WNBA Playoff Structure			
Round	Elimination Style	Teams Present	Reseeding
1	Single-Elimination	Seeds 5-8	N/A
2	Single-Elimination	Seeds 3-4, Winners of Round 1	Yes
3	Best-of-5	Seeds 1-2, Winners of Round 2	Yes
4	Best-of-5	Winners of Round 3	N/A

The league also has a draft that occurs shortly after the women's NCAA National Championship. To be eligible to be drafted, the entrants must be 22 years old during the year of the draft and forgo the rest, if any, of her college eligibility. In this draft, there are 3 rounds of 12 picks each. (WNBA) The determination of what team earns which draft pick is based upon records. The first four picks of the first round are determined by a draft lottery. In this lottery, the 4 teams that missed the playoffs have their lottery odds determined by the teams' two-year record. Teams with a better record will have worse odds at landing the number one overall pick. The lottery team with the worst two-year record has a 44.2% of earning the number one overall pick. The second worst two-year record has a 27.6% chance. The third worst has a 17.8% chance while the fourth worst has 10.4% chance of landing the number one overall pick. Following the lottery picks, the other picks are given in order of worst record to best record. The team with the best record will pick last in the first round. (WNBA) The picks in the second and third rounds correspond with the draft order of the first round. (WNBA) Picks can be traded between teams for/with players during the season and off-season. (WNBA)

NBA Counterparts

As for the National Basketball Association, the men's league has 30 teams, 1 of which is located in Canada. This league has two conferences: the east and west. Each conference contains 3 divisions. While the women's league only plays 34 games, the men's league plays 82 games, 52 of which are conference games. Now, as for the playoff systems, they are incredibly different. In the NBA, the top 8 teams from each conference qualify for the playoffs. This results in 16 teams making the playoffs. In each conference, the highest seed plays the lowest seed so 1 plays 8, 2 plays 7, etc. Every round is a best of 7. The playoffs are structured as a bracket where the

winners move on and play whoever was next in the bracket. There is no reseeding or byes in the NBA playoffs. (Brown, n.d.)

The NBA also has a draft. To be eligible for the draft, the player must be 19 years old and one year removed from high school and declare 60 days prior to the draft in June. (DraftSite, n.d.) The NBA draft, unlike the WNBA draft, has 2 rounds with 30 picks each. Each team is assigned one pick from each round. All of these picks are record based, with teams with worst records getting better draft picks, apart from the first 3. The first three picks are determined through a draft lottery, similar to the one in the WNBA. In this lottery, the 14 non-playoffs teams each are given odds at the number one pick. The three teams with the worst record have the best odds at the number one pick while the non-playoff team with the best record receives the worst odds at landing the number one pick. (DraftSite, n.d.) Odds are listed in the table below:

Worst Season Record	Odds at Number One Pick
1 st Worst	14%
2 nd Worst	14%
3 rd Worst	14%
4 th Worst	12.5%
5 th Worst	10.5%
6 th Worst	9%
7 th Worst	7.5%
8 th Worst	6%
9 th Worst	4.5%
10 th Worst	3%
11 th Worst	2%

12 th Worst	1.5%
13 th Worst	1%
14 th Worst	0.5%

Issues in the WNBA

As a developing league, the WNBA still has to overcome a variety of obstacles to reach its peak. It is compared to the NBA but still has a variety of issues to even make the leagues comparable. Salary, media, marketing, and player status are just 4 major factors of inequality for female athletes in the Women's National Basketball Association.

Salaries Discrepancies

In order to become an elite athlete, any individual must have exceptional talent, as well as be committed to invest in time and work. The players in the WNBA are no different. For example, Jackie Young, the 2019 WNBA #1 overall draft pick from the University of Notre Dame, averaged 14.5 points per game, 3.7 assists per game, and 6.6 rebounds per game in her final collegiate season. (University of Notre Dame, n.d.) As the number one overall pick, she'll earn \$52,564 in her rookie season. Other rookies will start at only \$41,202. (Hill, 2018)

During the 2017 WNBA season, the average WNBA salary was \$71,635. The maximum any player in the league could be paid was \$117,500. (Lough, 2018) The league also has bonuses for players that achieve certain accomplishments. Any player on a championship winning team earns an extra \$10,500. The runner-ups for that championship receives a \$5,250 bonus. The WNBA MVP also receives an extra \$15,000. The Rookie-of-the-Year earns an extra \$5,000. All-WNBA 1st team members, players that are considered the best at their respective position, earn

\$10,000. Any players chosen to participate in the All-Star game receive a \$2,500 bonus. (Hill 2018)

However, monetary compensation in the WNBA is far from what it is in the NBA. To contrast, one of the NBA's best players, Stephen Curry, earned 34 million during the 2017-2018 season. (Sraders 2018) During the 2017-2018 season, he played 1631 minutes. (Basketball Reference, n.d.) This means that he was paid \$20,846.11 for just spending one minute on a basketball court. To compare, Chiney Ogwumike of the Connecticut Sun makes \$117,500 a year playing in the WNBA. During the 2018 season, she played 790 minutes. This means that she earned only \$1,678.57 per minute she spent on the floor, although Ogwumike is one of the highest paid players in the league. Most other female players make significantly less. With the average WNBA salary being around \$79,000. (Hill, 2018) Yes, the NBA players will obviously make more because their league has a higher revenue stream. The NBA annually brings in \$7.368 billion in revenue while the WNBA annually brings in \$52.4 million. (Berri, 2018) However, the NBA refs even make more than the WNBA players. The salary of an NBA referee ranges from \$150,000 to \$550,000. (Berri, 2018). A WNBA player could leave the WNBA and go be a referee for the men's game and make nearly double her salary. The salary of a WNBA referee is even lower, approximately \$425 per game with a max of 34 games per season. (Lister, 2019) This results in a salary of \$14,450, which is why most WNBA referees have another full-time job.

Another big discrepancy with salary is the availability for American players to play overseas and make significantly more money. Since the WNBA season runs during the course of the summer, the players have the opportunity to play elsewhere the rest of the year. In fact, 89 of the 157 players take advantage of this opportunity. (Lamonier, 2018) There are major leagues in

Russia, Turkey, Korea, China, and Italy for women's basketball. The markets for these athletes are substantially larger in these locations, (Barker, 2016) but many of the details about overseas salaries aren't disclosed. It is known, however, that outstanding athletes can make nearly fifteen times their WNBA salaries overseas. For example, Diana Taurasi, an elite point guard and future Hall-of-Famer for the Phoenix Mercury, was offered \$1.5 million from her Russian team to skip the 2015 WNBA season. (Barker, 2016) Brittney Griner, another 1st overall pick in the WNBA draft, spent four months of her off-season playing to the Zhejiang Golden Bulls of the Women's Chinese Basketball Association. During these four months, she made \$600,000, which was twelve times more than her WNBA salary of \$49,440 at the time. (Wong, 2015) These are just two examples how lucrative the overseas market is for women's professional basketball players.

No Off-Season

However, salaries aren't the only issue regarding the WNBA. When the players also compete overseas, they eliminate their off-season, a time in which they workout, train, and recover from the regular season. Athletes use the off-season to improve their physical and mental states. During the season, athletes are constantly focused on the next game or competition but during the off-season, they get a chance to improve on their individual skills. This is a huge aspect of the off-season, but the main goal of the off-season is to recover. With constant games, practices, and routines, athletes may burn out and become exhausted. The off-season allows them to catch up on sleep, recover from an injury, and relax. (Decker Sports, 2018)

However, WNBA players that compete overseas are deprived of this vital off-season. Instead of relaxing or focusing on their improvements, they have to continue the day-to-day routines of in-season activities all year long. For example, 2016 MVP Nneka Ogwumike of the Los Angeles Sparks hit the game winning basket in Game 5 of the WNBA finals and was

playing her first overseas game less than 12 days following that incredible shot. (Barker, 2016).

The lack of rest and off-season leads to unsatisfied and injured players.

Media Coverage and Marketing

Sports coverage is a large part of American culture. However, that coverage generally includes the NFL, NBA, and MLB. The WNBA is certainly not covered to the same extent as men's basketball. This is a result of the NBA's broadcast deal that included an agreement that WNBA games would be broadcasted on ESPN, ESPN2, and ABC through the 2025 season. (Waldron, 2014) For the upcoming 2019 season, one regular season game will be televised on ESPN's main channel. (ESPN) In the deal, ESPN is supposed to offer 30 games annually, along with a Memorial Day doubleheader. (Waldron, 2014) However, most of these games are on ESPN2 which isn't available in most general cable packages. In terms of just covering women's sports, 2% of ESPN's *SportsCenter* airtime is devoted to discussing it. Much of this disparity may be a result of the time spent on each story. Women's stories are 77 seconds shorter, on average, than men's stories on *SportsCenter*. (Chaffee, 2017) ESPN has made an attempt at repairing this coverage sexism by creating an ESPNW brand site, mentioning that eventually it be become its own stand-alone television channel. (Chaffee, 2017) However, this still has yet to happen.

Media coverage as an issue ties in closely with the marketing issues with the league. According to Adam Silver, the NBA commissioner, one of the biggest issues is the demographics of supporters. The marketing of the league is geared towards young females, but the league is generally supported by older men. This is a result of the leagues focus on basketball fundamentals. Silver talked to many of the players and tried to find a way to connect them to their similar demographic, women 21-34. (Bonesteel, 2018) This lack of league support could be

a result of the poor marketing. With the WNBA, the overall lack of public outreach and accessibility to player information has slowed the league's progression. The players are rarely marketed. Few WNBA players have major product endorsements, but those that do include, A'ja Wilson with Mountain Dew, Skylar Diggins with Puma, Maya Moore with Jordan, and Britney Griner with Nike. (Regehr, 2019) Even though Griner, Moore, and Diggins have shoe endorsements, none of them have an individual shoe lines like LeBron James, Kevin Durant, or Kobe Bryant which help to captivate younger fans. NBA players also generously compensated for their product endorsements. LeBron James, a current player for the Los Angeles Lakers, makes roughly \$52 million a year from his endorsements for Nike, Beats, Coke, Kia, and Intel. Steph Curry makes roughly \$42 million from his endorsements with Under Armour, Chase, Infiniti, Brita, and Palm. (Rossi, 2019) These lucrative deals only belong to NBA players, not WNBA players

Player Status

Players in the WNBA do not enjoy the same status as their counterparts in the NBA. For example, in 2017, the Las Vegas Aces traveled to Washington D.C. by flying commercially. Since they flew commercial, the flight took 25-hours and traveled multiple time zones. By the time the players made it to D.C., the Aces refused to play due to the travel-induced fatigue, deciding to take a stand. The league ruled the game a forfeit even acknowledging the conditions. (Blackistone, 2018) Another example also occurred in 2017 to the Minnesota Lynx. The Minnesota Lynx lost the ability to play games at home during the WNBA playoffs because their court was being renovated for an NHL team that was holding preseason games. They had to play their "home" games at St. Paul's Xcel Energy Center instead of the Target Center in

Minneapolis. Additionally, the Las Vegas Aces lost their practice facility to the NBA Summer League.

Conclusion

Since basketball's roots in 1891, women have been intrigued and fascinated by the game, involving themselves in any way they can. This involvement and desire to compete has been filled with struggles. The women have fought legislators and athletic organizations to even get the rights to participate. By overcoming these obstacles, they eventually helped create the Women's National Basketball Association through the National Basketball Association. This league, created in 1996, faces constant adversity to gain traction as a league of their caliber. Since they are a developing league, they should be promoting themselves in any method that is feasible. In order to gain that traction, they need to reach loyal sports fans. This proves difficult because sports sites and shows don't bridge that gap adequately. This makes an impact on the finances of the WNBA, especially regarding attendance. In 2017, the WNBA averaged nearly 8,000 fans in attendance per game, while the NBA averaged nearly 18,000 fans in attendance per game. (Berri, 2018) If the ticket prices are comparable per game, the NBA teams generate 2.25 times as much money just at the sales gate than the WNBA teams. This does not account for merchandise sales but just by including ticket sales, the NBA teams bring in so much more money than the WNBA. However, the leagues will never see equal numbers, but proportional numbers are what is desired, especially regarding pay. As a whole, the WNBA only pays its players nearly 20% of the total league revenue, which totals out to be only \$11 million. The NBA, on the other hand, pays their players roughly 50% of the total league revenue, which totals out to be \$3 billion. (Bogage, 2017) This financial dynamic is not desirable for one of the oldest and successful women's professional sports league. These athletes deserve to be paid

comparably and being paid 20% of their league revenue isn't going to accomplish that.

However, David Berri, Professor of Economics at Southern Utah University estimates that it wouldn't take a large investment to give the WNBA players 50% of the league revenue and that such an investment is would result in in the WNBA players being paid what they are truly worth.

The question remains, how and who are going to make the changes necessary for the WNBA?

One upcoming solution is the SheIS organization which is made up of many different women's sports organization including the National Women's Hockey League, the National Women's Soccer League, and the WNBA. Founded in 2017, (Berri, 2018) their mission is for athletes in each sport to support those in other sports; also sharing and coordinating marketing efforts.

SheIS also works to recruit girls in women's sports. As their recruiting and fan-building efforts continue, the franchise of the WNBA and other leagues should continue to grow, and the valuation of these leagues rise accordingly. Until then, we'll keep in mind what league standout Sue Bird said: "Look, we're not over here saying we should be paid the same as the men. We're realistic. We understand that this is a business and that their revenue is insane compared to ours. But there is a bias that exists." (Voepel, 2018)

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